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Defragmenting the terms Self-employed, Entrepreneur and Business Owner

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Abstract

There is a growing belief from a range of sources that the only way forward economically is through the support and growth of entrepreneurial behaviour (Olaison, & Sørensen, 2014). Consequently, governments have been developing policies to facilitate entrepreneurship, universities have set up programmes to encourage entrepreneurship and organisations exist to support entrepreneurship (Rae and Woodier-Harris N, 2012; Anderson et al, 2014).

Unfortunately, it is not clear exactly what entrepreneurial behaviour is and is not (Hunter, 2012). There are multiple theories on the nature of entrepreneurial behaviour (Shook, Priem, & McGee, 2003; Davidson, 2004; O’Gorman, 2015). This lack of clarity and disagreement causes confusion about the roles and actions of people who engage in entrepreneurial behaviour (Lyons, Lynn, & Bhaird, 2015). Part of the confusion lies in the way people who own operate businesses are defined. Traditionally people who work for themselves are seen as either self-employed, entrepreneurs or business owners. However, despite having different meanings, the terms are often used interchangeably (Parker, 2004; Hartog et al., 2010; Van Solinge, 2015), primarily for the purpose of convenience or simplicity.

The interchangeable use of the terms in an environment, in which entrepreneurial behaviour is the favoured phenomenon, is likely to suppress important debates around the nature of entrepreneurial behaviour. This suppression is likely to divert the attention of policy makers and supporters away from important issues concerning the different roles, functions and needs of the self-employed, entrepreneurs or business owners. As a result, support that focuses on entrepreneurship could be at the expense of the other roles.

Therefore, there is a need for academic research to seek clarity concerning the use of different terms used to describe people who work for themselves. The authors intend to present a discussion paper that aims to generate some clarity around what the terms self-employed, entrepreneur and business owner actually mean. The purpose of this study is to consolidate a number of notions, theories and concepts found in the literature concerning the definition, conceptualisation and characterisation of self-employed, entrepreneur and business owner. The intention is to identify both similarities or overlaps and distinct differences, in order construct a model that embraces self-employed, entrepreneur and business owner in a single structure.

Key words: business-owner, enterprise, entrepreneur, policy, self-employed

Introduction

The recent accelerated growth in working for yourself has in part been driven by wide spread support from a number of sources. Encouragement for working for yourself can be found in the approach adopted almost universally across the UK and Europe. Entrepreneurship and enterprise education is being provided to all areas of the community, from young children to senior citizens, and in just about every formal educational institution (Honig and Martin, 2014). Many governments across the world make the development and growth of working for your self a priority. Recent consecutive governments in the UK have all introduced various policies and schemes to encourage entrepreneurs to set up businesses. Primarily, economic, cultural and social factors drive these policies with the view of stimulating both employment and growth (Huggins, and Williams, 2011). To encourage people to work for themselves governments are developing policies around taxation, education, regulations and subsidies (Ribeiro-Soriano and Galindo-Martín, 2012). Encouragement to work for your self can also be found in the media where stories of the successes of people who are working for themselves are widely read (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2014). TV reality shows that help turn around failing businesses or offer investment to people with business ideas are extremely popular. Alongside this one of the highest selling genre of business books are on starting a business or are about the success of who have work for themselves and become extremely rich.

Yet despite, or perhaps as a consequence, this plethora of publicity around working for your self has created confusion around what it means to work for your self. Are you self-employed, or perhaps you are an entrepreneur, maybe you are a solopreneur, or just a business owner? Many of the terms used to describe someone who works for themselves are used interchangeably (Parker, 2004; Sluis et al., 2010; Van Solinge, 2015). Essentially there is a glut of multiple theories on the nature of entrepreneurial behaviour and self-employment (Davidson, 2004; O’Gorman, 2015; Shook, Priem, & McGee, 2003). The issues with the multiplicity of terms primarily relate to their definition, conceptualisation and characterisation resulting in a lack of clarity around what it means to work for your self. This lack of clarity, along with a degree of stereotyping, also causes misunderstanding about the roles and actions of people who work for themselves (Crick, 2011; Lyons, et al 2015). Which raises the question, are they all that different?

This wide range of terms, titles and labels has significant ramifications for policy makers providing support or making decisions around taxation, for example, as well as for those that encourage and facilitate support for people who work for him or herself. Currently there is no clear model of working for yourself that clarifies the differences between the various terms used to describe the self-employed. The aim of this paper is to look at the literature for descriptions and explanations around the various terms used and construct a model that looks at the differences and similarities between the definitions, conceptualisations and characterisations of the various terms.

It should be noted that this study is not necessarily an attempt to reduce the various ways that people who do work for themselves to a single definition, a type of metatheory of people who work for themselves. The model purpose is to enhance our understanding and to see where the various definitions fit within a unified structure. We are not seeking to prove or disprove

various definitions, but to create a general understanding that can be figuratively shown how the various definitions are interconnected. It is this interconnection that will help formulate better policy and support for people who work for themselves. In summary this paper aims to bring a measure of structure to a field that can appear somewhat confused and contradictory, due to the difficulties in understanding which term to use, and under what circumstances. This model will also provide a solid foundation for further research into the field of people who work for themselves.

Literature Review

The recent increase in the number of people working for themselves has seen significant growth of government intervention and support over the past 15 years (Anderson et al, 2014; Rae and Woodier-Harris N, 2012). The rationale behind this is that governments now see enterprising and entrepreneurial behaviour as being central to increasing productivity, encouraging competition, developing innovation, improving employment numbers, building prosperity and invigorating communities (Beugelsdijk and Noorderhaven, 2005; Huggins and Williams, 2011; Ritchie and Lam, 2006). Historically speaking, small business policy has been evolving since 1997, which led to the maintenance of innovative policies already taking place and to a continued focus on encouraging enterprise activities amongst disadvantaged groups (FSB, 2013).

The Finance Act in 2000 intended to encourage working for your self by introducing changes to the tax liabilities of independent professionals (Leighton, 2015). In 2002 the UK Government Agency Small Business Service (SMS) published a framework for fostering and supporting the emergence of new and existing small businesses (Gov.UK, 2016). The objectives of the framework were to utilise seven key themes that would encourage economic growth, improve productivity and develop wider involvement in enterprise across the nation (Ritchie and Lam, 2006). Additionally, programmes like the New Deal Initiative were designed to encourage the unemployed to start working for themselves (FSB, 2013). Over the years support for working for your self was broadened through activities such as Community Development Finance Institutions and the Community Development Venture Fund, UK High Technology Fund, Regional Venture Capital Funds, and The Early Growth Fund, all created to alleviate the equity gap among small business (FSB, 2013).

Following a report by Lord Young in 2013 the UK Government put in place several measures to ensure the promotion of youth entrepreneurial activity, through the creation a variety of programs which are expected to make a considerable difference in years to come in the British economy (Young, 2013). These measures involved a “Supporting Small Business Charter” which encourages business schools to help SME’s grow – accompanied by an award scheme; a “Growth Vouchers Program” with a total worth of £30 million invested in small businesses who find innovative approaches to overcome behavioural barriers and increase growth; “Start-Up loans” to provide mentoring and funding for start-up businesses, aiming for youth entrepreneurs to get their business ideas further (also worth £30 million); “SME Growth Loans” as part of the Enterprise Finance Guarantee (EFG), which facilitate loans of up to £ 25,000 targeting SMEs in their third year in activity aiming for growth; and “New Funding for SMEs” - worth £ 100 million – from the Business Finance Partnership, which

promotes new sources of finance to businesses, including peer-to-peer and crowdfunding (Young, 2013; Gov.UK, 2016). Other schemes of encouragement include the New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) which provides financial support to unemployed people who want to consider self-employment as a way to get back into work (Hinks et al, 2015). To further encourage enterprising behaviours, the UK Government has developed policies regarding taxation, regulation and subsidies that make working for your self more attractive (Ribeiro-Soriano and Galindo-Martin, 2012).

The support for working for your self extends beyond the Government with charities, large companies and the media getting involved. The Prince's Trust offers low cost loans and mentoring (The Prince's Trust, 2014). Santander, Shell and Ernst and Young, amongst many others, all run competitions to encourage people to work for themselves (Ernst and Young, 2014; Santander, 2014; Shell LiveWIRE, 2014). Newspapers like The Guardian have sections devoted to successful start-ups and there are many reality TV shows focusing on working for yourself. There are literally hundreds of thousands web sites dedicated to providing advice and support to nascent enterprising people. The number of books on starting your own business runs into the tens of thousands and is the highest selling genre of business books (Best and Khuong, 2016).

This drive to encourage and develop enterprising behaviour is not limited to the UK. Other countries in Europe have also been attempting to promote and support self-employment. For instance, in Spain public and private institutions have dedicated themselves to developing entrepreneurship support services and increase, mainly through universities, research on aspects related to entrepreneurs (Garzón, 2010). Switzerland is another European country that has seen growth in rate of people working for themselves from 1990 and has responded to this by looking at improving social factors such as pension rights and unemployment insurance coverage (Falter, 2005). The Swiss have also developed training opportunities for people who want to work for themselves (Falter, 2005).

The initiatives and encouragement is clearly having an impact. While working for your self has seen growth and decline at various times in the UK since post-1979 Thatcher era (Meager, 2015), currently, there is resurgence in working for yourself. In 2008 the United Kingdom had the highest share (78%) of solo people working for themselves from a selection of 26 OECD countries (Van Stel et al., 2014). Recent studies show that working for your self is at its highest level today than at any other time over the last 40 years (ONS, 2016). The Department of Business Innovation and Skills identified in 2015 that more than three quarters of the UK's 5.4 million private sector enterprises involved only their owners working alone or with partners. This means that working for your self is a significant part of the national economy, making an estimated £237bn contribution to the UK economy (Kitching, 2015). In 2015, the Parliament in the UK acknowledge the "boom" of self-employment, which had known a significant rise from 2008-09 – after the recession – achieving a record high of 4.5 million in 2014 (ONS.gov.uk, 2016). Studies undertaken by the Office for Budget Responsibility suggested that self-employment is expected to stay high in the near future (ONS.gov.uk, 2016).

This growth in people who are working for themselves has spawned questions around the status of this group and there is debate as to whether they are being adequately supported despite the range of services available (Wynn, 2015). In terms of policy for example, the issue of workers' rights is widely being questioned with the current UK government (Leighton, 2015). These issues are further complicated by the contrasts between different work experiences. A person working for themselves in publishing, as an IT consultant, a cleaner or an agriculture worker have the potential to be classified as working for themselves, yet have little in common in terms of what they might need from a regulatory framework. There is initial evidence that people have different attitudes towards social support (Leighton and Wynn, 2011).

Nevertheless, it is difficult to evaluate the efficacy of enterprise policies, although it appears safe to consider that, overall, initiatives developed to support small businesses and self-employed people over the last decades have been successful (FSB, 2013). However, Audit Commission (1999), DTI/HM Treasury (2002) and DTI (2007) have considered that the process of finding policies to support enterprise can be 'chaos' and a 'labyrinth of initiatives' (in FSB, 2013).

As a result of an increasing number of people working for themselves, as opposed to working for others, throughout UK, and the rest of the world, and along with the plethora of support services and regulations it has become more important than ever to develop a deeper understanding of how this economic activity works and to develop policies that support this sector of economic activity (Burke, 2015). One area that urgently needs to be considered is the terminology used to describe people who work for themselves.

Broadly speaking, people who work for themselves can be seen as either engaging in a survival strategy or as evidence of entrepreneurial spirit (OECD, 2011). However, in reality the way people who work for themselves are described consists of a wide range of terms such as entrepreneur, small business owner, freelancer, independent professional, solopreneur or self-employed. These definitions of people who work for themselves are constructed around two notions; one based on legal definitions and the other on behavioural factors (McKeown, 2015). As a result, there is a tendency for scholars to define people who work for themselves according to their own beliefs around the field of people working for themselves (Odemudia, 2015).

Consequently, the distinctions made by researchers and scholars in defining people who work for themselves is unclear, contentious and fragmented (Howarth et al., 2005; Jones and Wadhvani, 2006; Odemudia, 2015; Sappleton and Lourenço, 2015; Sluis et al., 2010). Unfortunately, these terms are often used interchangeably (Parker, 2004; Sluis et al., 2010). This interchangeable use of these terms does not allow for a transparent and specific definition of what a person working for themselves actually does (Kitching and Smallbone, 2012). Furthermore, the use of a wide range of terms to describe people who work for themselves creates misinterpretation and confusion around meanings of entrepreneurship, small business and enterprise (Peneder, 2009). Adding to the confusion is the argument that the practical distinction of someone who is working for themselves as either self-employed, a business owner or an entrepreneur or any one of the other terms presented is difficult to make

with some contending that they are one and the same (McKeown, 2015). Moreover, the multiplicity of definitions makes it difficult to measure quantitatively and describe qualitatively accurately what it means to work for yourself.

The use of multiple descriptions of people who work for themselves has a significant impact across a range of factors. At a formal level it affects things like policy, taxation and regulations. Evidence of the effect of a lack of a coherent definition around someone who works for themselves can be found in the way National Insurance payments and Tax is paid. There is no single definition for both and in practice it is a case of looking at the behavioural characteristics of the individual and on the balance of probability making a decision (Practical Law, 2016). Furthermore, unlike dependent employees, a large proportion of people who work for themselves are not included in social security systems because there is no common denominator for this group specifically (Fachinger and Frankus, 2015). Loopholes in the regulatory system are exploited leading organisations to push employees into working for themselves in order to avoid tax and National Insurance payments leading to a rise in bogus self-employment (Dellot, 2014).

As a result, there is a perception that fairness, protection and government support remain contentious for small businesses (Deakin, 2010; Faix, 2012). Many individuals do work for themselves are considered a business, whereas others who also work for themselves are not and so miss out on the support and protection or are penalised through taxation (McKeown, 2015). As there is no explicit legislation on working for your self, there is a strong argument for a convincing and coherent legal framework that explicitly defines working for yourself (Leighton and Wynn, 2011).

On a more informal level there are problems that emerge to complicate what it means to work for your self. One area of concern is what is seen as rising levels of vulnerability in regards to some forms of self-employment, such as fixed term contracts, casual and zero-hour workers (Leighton, 2015). Universities are at the forefront of developing promising and aspiring people who want to work for them self. Conversely, the lack of coherent definitions causes misunderstandings of what this actually means due to the diversity of definitions (Odemudia 2015). Students often resist certain labels that describe what they are doing such as business owner or entrepreneur as they work for them self (Odemudia 2015). One consequence of this is that students may not seek support because they do not see themselves as entrepreneurs or even business owners (Odemudia 2015).

Misinterpretation also occurring in other cases, where inadequate activities associated with small businesses due to poor perception of small businesses by the community was also used to describe activities of entrepreneurship and enterprise (Breen, 2004). This created confusion of meanings of entrepreneurship, small business and enterprise in a specific community although, in spite of that, unsuitable terms are still being widely used to misrepresent entrepreneurship as a result the meanings of those unsuitable terms are slowly replacing the meaning of the term entrepreneur (Breen, 2004; Sewell and Pool, 2010).

There emerges from this diversity of views and application of definitions a critical question that neither the literature nor the legal structure is able to answer coherently and in

agreement; what exactly does it mean to be working for yourself? Apart from a few exceptions, there appears to be an empirical disregard or mere default categorisation of people working for them self (Leighton, 2014; Burke, 2012; GEM National Reports; ComRes, 2012). The answer to that question lies in creating a model of what working for your self means. Without one, we will continue to lump many different forms of working for your self under multiple banners, which can only create even more misperceptions (Dellot, 2014). From a legal perspective such a model would enable a fair and transparent system of taxation and other regulatory processes. From a research perspective the model would provide a clearer understanding regarding the process which an enterprise can develop from being established and managed by a person working for him/herself towards a higher-scale establishment (owned business, corporation, etc.) or, possibly, the other way around as well. This model would also enable a clearer understanding in terms of entrepreneurial behaviour and innovation of what it means to work for your self.

Methodology

The purpose and objective of this study is to gain an insight into, and an understanding of, the way people who work for themselves are defined, and from that insight and understanding generate a model that reduces the confusion around the definitions (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012). The purpose of the model is enable policy and support to be better focused on the actual needs of people who work for themselves. Consequently, the methodology chosen needed to be able to provide a wealth of high quality information that helps construct a model that will reduce the confusion around the definitions and can be used to develop policy and support for people who work for themselves.

Due the complexity and wide array of definitions, conceptualisations, opinions and thinking concerning people who work for themselves, it became apparent that the most effective method of conducting this research was to undertake an exploratory approach. This approach allowed an open-ended qualitative enquiry that investigated the links within and between the various definitions (Edmondson and McManus, 2007). Such a methodology will permit deeper understanding of the similarities and differences between the definitions and generate deeper meaning and comprehension (Sullivan, 2000). Furthermore, this approach will open the way for further research into the behaviours of people who work for themselves.

Given the purpose and objectives it is argued that a systematic and critical review of the literature is particularly suitable for this type of explorative research (Hart, 1998; Short, 2009; Webb and Lambe, 2007). By conduct a critical review, evaluation and analysis of the literature, along with other relevant publications such as reports and newspapers the researchers will be able to identify the various components and allow greater understanding to emerge (Huff, 2009; Petticrew and Roberts, 2006; Saunders et al, 2012; Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). Drawing from such a wide range of resources allows a wide variety of concepts and definitions to be considered leading to greater conceptual and empirical development (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Yin, 2009).

In searching the literature for appropriate data the initial key words employed were: entrepreneurship, entrepreneur, self-employment, self-employed, small business, business

owner and enterprise. These words were then used in combination with further words (e.g. definition, conceptualisation, characteristics of entrepreneur and characteristics of self-employed). Examples of such combinations include: ‘entrepreneurship and self-employment’; ‘entrepreneurship and definition’. We took a broad approach to the literature that included text books, empirical peer reviewed papers, conceptual papers and web sites providing general advice and opinions about people who work for themselves. The rationale for this lies in the explorative nature of this project. In particular, the researchers are looking to detect patterns about the nature of entrepreneurial behaviour that enables us to document the complexity of the phenomenon; self-employed, entrepreneur and business owner (Mair and Schoen, 2007).

Drawing on Braun and Clarke’s (2006) approach a thematic analysis of the data was undertaken. Our assumptions are that people who work for themselves are defined by the fact that they sell their time, skills and expertise and that they make strategic decisions about the work they choose to undertake. An example of what we mean by strategic decisions is that someone who works for themselves can choose what work they will undertake without necessarily experiencing a financial loss. In coding the data, a semantic approach was taken as there is no need to question the veracity of the various definitions. Essentially we are just looking for definitions of various labels and the similarities and differences that enables a more coherent view of the structure and nature of how people who work for themselves can be presented.

Findings

The table below gives an indication of the scale of the issue. The table lists some of the most common terms that have been used in the various sources we looked at to label someone who works for themselves.

TERM	SOURCES
Solopreneur	Boyd, 2015; Holmlund, 2016; Miller, 2005; Rampton 2016; Shelton, 2016; Webster, 2016
(Independent) Contractor	Barley and Kunda, 2006; Wimbledon, 2016
Independent Professional	Bögenhold et al. 2014; Burke, 2015; Leighton, 2015 and 2014; McKeown, 2015; Prottas and Thompson, 2006; Syrett, 2015; Van den Born and Van Witteloostuijn, 2013;
Freelancer	Beugelsdijk and Noorderhaven, 2005; Bögenhold et al. 2014; Burke, 2015, 2012, 2011; Burke and Cowling, 2015; Fachinger and Frankus, 2015; Frey, 2013; Gandia, 2012; Guillebeau, 2012; Holmlund, 2016; Kitching and Smallbone, 2012; Kiyosaki, 2010; Leighton and Wynn, 2011; Masters, 2015; McKeown, 2015; Merz and Paic, 2006; Turner, 2012; Shelton, 2016; Sluis et al, 2010;

	Webster, 2016; Wimbledon, 2016; Wynn, 2015;
Self-employed	Álvarez and Sinde-Cantorna; 2014; Audretsch et al., 2011; Boyd, 2016; Beugelsdijk and Noorderhaven, 2005; Beutell et al., 2014; Bosch and Van Vuuren, 2010; Burke, 2015 and 2012; Caliendo et al., 2014; ComRes, 2012; Frosch, 2011; Fuchs-Schündeln, 2009; Gandia, 2012; GEM National Reports, 2011, 2016; Giulietti et al., 2013; Heim and Lurie, 2010; Hession, 2016; Lee-Ross, 2015; Leighton, 2014; Lewis et al., 2014; Llanes and Barbour, 2007; Martinez et al., 2007; McKeown, 2015; Mole and Ram, 2012; Owens et al., 2012; Prottas and Thompson, 2006; Shelton, 2016; Simon and Way, 2015; Smith-Hunter, 2011; Taylor, 2009; Tighe, 2016; van Stel and de Vries, 2015; van Stel et al., 2014; Webster, 2016
Business Owner	Beugelsdijk and Noorderhaven, 2005; Bjerke, 2013; Boyd, 2016; Dana, 2011; Di Bitetto et al., 2013; Gandia, 2012; Giulietti et al., 2013; Guillebeau, 2012; Hallward-Driemeier, 2013; Hession, 2016; Hogarth and Karellaia, 2012; Holmlund, 2016; Hughes and Jennings, 2012; Hunter, 2013; Karlsson et al., 2015; Kiyosaki, 2010; Lewis et al., 2014; Locke and Baum, 2007; ; Lora and Castellani, 2013; Maslak, 2014; Zurik, 2014; Mole and Ram, 2012; Odemudia, 2015; Owens et al., 2012; ; Peris-Ortiz and Sahut, 2014; Piperopoulos, 2012; Prottas and Thompson, 2006; Ruvio et al., 2010; Shelton, 2016; Taylor, 2015; Webster, 2016; Zhao et al., 2005; Zurik, 2014;
Entrepreneur	Álvarez and Sinde-Cantorna; 2014. Beugelsdijk and Noorderhaven, 2005; Bhuian et al., 2012; Bird et al., 2012; Bjerke, 2013; Blume and Covin, 2011; Bowman, 2011; Brewer and Gibson, 2014; Dana, 2011; Dvir et al., 2010; Eddleston and Powell, 2012; Fayolle and Venesa, 2013, Guillebeau, 2012; Hallward-Driemeier, 2013; Hogarth and Karellaia, 2012; Hughes and Jennings, 2012; Hunter, 2013; IDRC, 2013; Kachru, 2011; Karlsson et al., 2015; Kuratko, 2009; Jayawarna et al., 2011; Lewis et al., 2014; Llanes and Martinez et al., 2007; Locke and Baum, 2007; Lora and Castellani, 2013; Maslak, 2014; Masters, 2015; ; McKeown, 2015; Michelacci and Silva, 2007; Mole and Ram, 2012; OECD, 2015; Peris-Ortiz and Sahut, 2014; Piperopoulos, 2012; Ramoglou, 2013; Ruvio et al., 2010; Shane and Nicolaou, 2013; Shelton, 2016; Sluis et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2012; Syrett, 2015; Tamas Lopes, 2012; Taylor, 2015; Tighe, 2016; ; Thompson, 2004; Turner, 2012; Valerio et al., 2014; Van Gelderen and Masurel, 2012 van Stel et al., 2014; Weber et al., 2014; Williams, 2007; Zhao et al., 2005; Zurik, 2014;

Table 1

In summary, when comes to differentiating between these labels the issue is even more problematic. This is because while the above authors use the various labels, not all of them define what they meant by that label. Consequently, working out what the author specifically means was not easy.

For those that do define their labels the result is only slightly clearer. For example, Rampton (2016) argues that solopreneurs are unlikely to build a team within their economic activities whereas entrepreneurs are likely to do so. He also argues that entrepreneurs are not as attached to their businesses as a solopreneur and more likely to look for a buyer at a later stage (Rampton, 2016). Wimbledon (2016) explains the both freelancers and contractors are self-employed but different to each other. Contractors tend to work for one client at a time in the client's premises and a freelancer tends to work from home for multiple clients (Wimbledon, 2016). Yet, Wimbledon (2016) that qualifies this view by adding generalisations such as 'may' and 'usually'. Bogenhold et al (2014) sees self-employment as an overarching concept that embraces all of the labels and identifies independent professionals and freelancers as being a sub-set of self-employment. They recognise that entrepreneurship is often a substitution for self-employment; even though they are not the same (Bogenhold et al, 2014). Yet the authors do not define what entrepreneurship actually is. Boyd (2016) picks up on the notion of employing others by suggesting that self-employed generally do everything, whereas business owners and entrepreneurs employ others to do things. Martinez et al (2007) attempts to differentiate terms by defining entrepreneurs as people who set up companies providing new products or developing new processes; and self-employment as participating in economic activity. While on the other hand Álvarez and Sinde-Cantorna (2014) and Heim and Lurie (2010) use the terms self-employed and entrepreneurs interchangeably, as though they are one and the same. Hession (2016) differentiates that while self-employed face risks similar to a business owner they are not the same. Fundamentally Hession (2016) claims the difference is that a business owner focuses on wealth creation, constantly looking to invest in growth, while a self-employed person focuses on an income to live off. In a similar vein, Prottas and Thompson, (2006) self-employment falls into two clearly defined categories; business owners and independents. Business owners are identified as those that employ others and people, while those that do not employ others are seen as independently self-employed (Prottas and Thompson, 2006). Sluis et al (2010) put forward the idea that an entrepreneur is someone who sets up and then operates a business. Describing entrepreneurship as consisting of three actions; levels of innovation, the degree of proactivity and the amount of risk involved, Bhuian et al (2012) imply that entrepreneurial is more of a type of behaviour than a specific person.

Despite the several diverse labels, the similarities between the various types are actually quite substantial. Irrespective of the label, people who work for themselves have their own interests at heart in a way that employed people do not. Personal and financial freedom along with a sense of independence are key factors in all of the labels and indicative of the desire to work for yourself (Ramoglou, 2013; Shane and Nicolaou, 2013; Van Gelderen and Masurel, 2012). Likewise, there is degree of stress experienced by all people who work for themselves irrespective of the label (Bjerke, 2013; Blume and Covin, 2011). By the very nature of their

actions people who work for themselves indicate both ability and a desire to embrace new opportunities irrespective of the label (Di Bitetto et al., 2013). This manifests its self by the fact that anyone who works for themselves needs to look for opportunities in a way that employed people do not. People who work for themselves all face challenges that require an ability to stay focused, something that is less evidence in employed people (Brewer and Gibson, 2014; Eddleston and Powell, 2012; Kuratko, 2009; Valerio et al., 2014). The consequence of making a mistake has greater ramifications for people who work for themselves in ways that are not necessarily the same for employed people, again irrespective of the label (Hallward-Driemeier, 2013; Hogarth and Karelaia, 2012; Hughes and Jennings, 2012; Karlsson et al., 2015; Lewis et al., 2014; Mole and Ram, 2012; Smith et al., 2012).

There are differences as well. People who work for themselves and do not employ anyone, and have limited number of customers set up an activity that is considerably easier to do than someone planning to set up an activity that requires several employees to service a larger number of customers (Tamas Lopes, 2012). Having fewer employees, fewer customers along with a small business footprint suggests that there would considerably less initial planning, as well as ongoing planning than a business that aims to employ many people, have more customers and a bigger business footprint (Maslak, 2014; Zurik, 2014). This suggests that a person who works for themselves without employees has a lower levels risk (Owens et al., 2012). The level of flexibility to adapt to a broader variety of work is higher amongst those who work for themselves and do not have employees, than for those that set up entities that have employees (Guillebeau, 2012). The opportunity to earn much higher incomes is an attraction for people who work for themselves. However, those that limit the size of their activities by not employing people may be at risk of earning less than if they employed people (Kachru, 2011). The level of management skills is also likely to be less developed for a person working for themselves and with no employees and fewer customers, than a person working for themselves with many customers and employees (Fayolle and Venesa, 2013; Giulietti et al., 2013).

Discussion

While there are differences and variations amongst the different labels, what is clear is that these differences and variations all explain how the self-employed act. Three particular themes emerge from the data that are used to support arguments for the fragmentation of people who work for themselves. The first one relates to the number of people someone has working for them, the second is the number of customers or clients they may have and the third is the complexity of the income producing activity. However, these themes are more about how a person who works for themselves acts and less about what they do.

All of the definitions indicate what people who work for themselves are doing is the consequence of decisions that they make. For example, Wimbledon's (2016) explanation of the differences between a contractor and freelancer centres on the way they provide a service, yet the service they are providing is exactly the same. Bogenhold et al (2014) have no problem in seeing everyone who works for them self as a subset of self-employment. As this is an attempt to simplify the field of people working for themselves, Bogenhold et al (2014) approach supports the idea that what self-employed people do is exactly the same and the

differences lie in how they do it. Martinez et al (2007) imply that only people who set up companies providing new goods or processes are entrepreneurs. However, this view has been strongly disputed (Gartner, 1988; Hunter, 2012). There is nothing to stop a person who works for themselves providing a new product or process, making them as entrepreneurial as anyone else as this is primarily a behaviour in response to an opportunity (Bhuiyan et al, 2012). Some of the authors do not distinguish between the terms self-employed, business owners and entrepreneurs, suggesting that they all mean the same thing (e.g. Alvarez and Sinde-Cantorna, 2014; Heim and Lurie, 2010). Hession (2016) asserts that the self-employed do not have to deal with the same risks as a business owner. This is certainly true, but the risks have more to do with how the actors operate than the fact that they are operating. There are many other factors that produce risks and the fact that you are working for your self is just one. Hession (2016) further claims that business owners focus on wealth generation and self-employed focus on income. Again this is about how they act rather than what they do. Whether someone sets up a business to become immensely rich or a business to earn a living is the result of how they run those businesses, and not the fact that they are both working for themselves. People who work for themselves do so for all sorts of diverse reasons, yet this does not change what they are doing, only how they do it.

The notion that the ‘what’ is the same for all people who work for themselves and the ‘how’ provides the variety is highlighted by the claims that business owners employ people and independently self-employed don’t (Prottas and Thompson, 2006). The decision to employ someone is based entirely on how you need to run your business in order to meet your objectives. Levels of employment are determined solely on a needs basis and not on the decision to work for your self.

The similarities between the various labels further support the notion that the labels focus more on how people working for them self function. Personal and financial freedom and a degree of independence are common motivational factors that encourage people to work for them self. These desires are generally found to be higher amongst people who work for themselves than employees (Ramoglou, 2013; Shane and Nicolau, 2013). The levels of stress are also similar and probably come about due to the fact that the control of their employment lies within their own actions in creating that employment in the first place. People who work for themselves need to look for opportunities for employment irrespective of the size or complexity of their actions (Di Bitteto et al, 2013). A person with just one customer at a time and only his or herself working in the business needs to look for the next opportunity just as much as a person running an operation that they own but employs many, with many customers. Making a mistake can be as fatal for the individual person working for them self, as much as it can be fatal for someone employing hundreds (e.g. Hallward-Driemeier, 2013; Hogarth and Karelaia, 2012; Smith et al., 2012).

The differences also suggest that the labels are more about the how people who work for them self act than what they actually do. While having no employees and just one or two customers or clients is significantly easier to start-up than having a business that employs many and has many customers (Maslak, 2014; Zurik, 2014), this is still about the processes of working for your self. It certainly requires less planning, but it still needs planning. Likewise, with flexibility to respond, it is well documented that the larger the organisation the harder it

is to be flexible around opportunities. The fact that by employing people means you are likely to earn high incomes does not really hold up. Incomes are related to a whole raft of factors and not to the fact that you work for your self. Some people earn considerably less working for them self, than if they were employees. Nor is the amount of managerial skills a person has a reason to differentiate between people who work for his or herself into categories such as an independent contractor or a business owner (Fayolle and Venesa, 2013). Again the level of management skills required to run a business is related to the complexity of the activities not because you are working for your self.

What is noticeable from the findings is that what people who work for themselves do is the same. All of the actors regardless of the label create their own employment, control that employment and make strategic decisions about that employment. The variations and differences presented through the labels are entirely about how people who work for themselves act.

The argument that only a business owner provides employment for others is unsustainable. Working for your self generates employment, irrespective of the number of employees; even a person who works for themselves with no employees has created employment for themselves. This is a job that did not exist before the person acted as working for them self. The data clearly indicates irrespective of the behaviours if employment is being created by a person for them self rather than offered by an organisation, then that person should be defined as working for themselves. So there really should not be an argument around the number of employees determining the employment status on the strength that they employ others.

The number of customers is also untenable in determining if someone is working for his or herself. An employee does not have the right to refuse service when it is in the interests of his employer to provide the service. Yet, a person working for them self has that right, even if it is not in their interest. This means that the person working for them self has control over their employment in a way that an employed person does not. Having just one customer or having many customers should not be relevant to the employment status of someone working for themselves.

The complexity of the income producing activities is also not relevant. Income producing activities by people working for themselves varies in complexity. Even the first two, the number of employees and the number of customers has a variable impact on the complexity. Income producing activities that employ hundreds of people with hundreds of customers may be far less complex than activities that employ a few with a few customers. Equally an employed person may have variations in the complexity of the tasks they perform without it influencing their employment status. Ultimately it is the strategic decisions about the employment that distinguishes a self-employed person from an employed person, it does not differentiate between the way people who work for themselves what they do.

The three factors essentially determine the nature of a person's income producing activities. It seems appropriate to conclude that a person who meets these three factors is working for them self, irrespective of the number of employees, customers or the complexity of the activities. This draws on Bogenhold et al (2014) argument that self-employment is an

overarching concept under which all other concepts fall. Therefore, we would argue that the most appropriate term for someone who works for themselves is self-employed.

The proposed model is determined by the three particular concepts that emerge from the data. Fundamentally a person can be acknowledged as self-employed if they create employment for themselves and possibly others, they have control over that employment and they make strategic decisions about that employment.

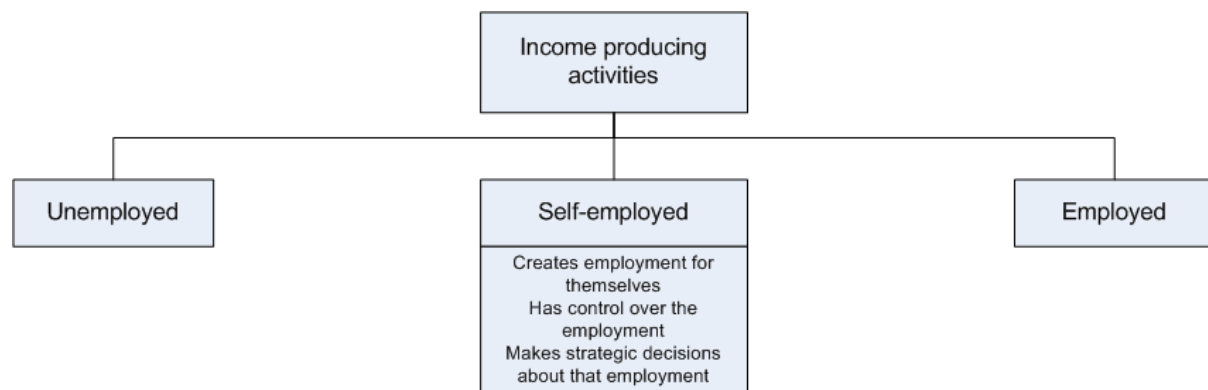


Figure 1

There is little doubt that the purpose of self-employment is to get the most out of the effort and resources put into the income producing activities (Nziramasanga et al, 2009). What that effort is varies from person to person. Furthermore, not every employee necessarily seeks to maximise the rewards from their employment in relation to their efforts. Consequently, one might argue that this makes every self-employed person a business owner.

Conclusion

This study was an exploration of the literature with the objective of generating a model that simplifies the definition of what it means to work for your self. As mentioned in the introduction there is no intention to challenge or dispute the various definitions and concepts around people who work for themselves. There is agreement that greater consensus is needed around the various terms that describe people who work for themselves. With the increasing intent to develop and grow self-employment further, creating a simplified structure is an imperative for policy makers and those that support self-employed. Our aim has been to reduce the level of confusion around what it means to work for your self by developing a model figuratively shows how the various definitions and notions are interconnected and can be present in a simplified manner.

By looking at some of the literature what comes out is that fundamentally a person who creates their own employment, has control over that employment and makes strategic decisions around that employment should be considered self-employed and by default a business owner. This should be taken into consideration when developing policy and support for self-employed.

The model allows for a more focused approach to the behavioural aspects of a self-employed person. The three factors identified in this paper, number of employees, number of customers and complexity of actions, used to identify the status of people who work for themselves are essentially continuums that can provide focal points for further research around the behaviour of self-employed people, rather than being used to label people as either self-employed or not self-employed, as business owners or not business owners. Furthermore, using these continuums other behavioural concepts such as entrepreneurial behaviour and levels of innovation can also be explored in a way that also allows continuums to be established that explain how self-employment works.

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